CAPTAIN AMERICA

NO. 53

10¢

FEB. COMICS

IN THIS ISSUE!

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CAPTAIN AMERICA

"ROBE of EVIL"

WHO WAS HE? WHAT WAS HIS NAME? NO ONE KNEW WHO HE WAS... NO ONE KNEW WHERE HE CAME FROM. OUT OF THE BLIZZARD HE APPEARED - KNOWING NO LAW BUT HIS OWN - **KILL, KILL, KILL!** WITH ONE BLOODCURDLING BATTLE-CRY, THE DENIZENS OF THE UNDERWORLD GATHERED ROUND HIM, RALLYING TO HIS GRUESOME CAUSE. THEN **CAPTAIN AMERICA** AND **BUCKY**, COMPLETELY BAFFLED BY THIS 20th CENTURY SATAN, PICKED UP THE CHALLENGE AND TOOK ON THEIR WORTHIEST OPPONENT---

"THE ROBE"-MASTER OF EVIL!!!

FOR WEEKS, CAPTAIN AMERICA AND HIS PAL BUCKY HAVE BEEN CEASELESSLY HUNTING FOR "HAMMER RILEY" AND HIS KILLER MOB, WANTED FOR A SERIES OF NEEDLESS MURDERS IN THE COURSE OF SEVERAL SPECTACULAR ROBBERIES! AND FINALLY... ONE COLD, BLUSTERY NIGHT, IN AN ALLEY ADJOINING A BANK...

IF THAT 'LOOKOUT' WOULD LOOK THE OTHER WAY FOR ABOUT TWO SECONDS, WE COULD MAKE IT ACROSS --- AND JUMP HIM!

WE CAN'T WAIT, BUCKY! WE'LL HAVE TO CHANCE IT FROM HERE!

HE'LL PROBABLY SPOT US BEFORE WE'RE HALFWAY ACROSS AND OPEN FIRE! KEEP LOW AND IN BACK OF ME...

WHENEVER YOU'RE READY, CAP!

THE SHARP-EYED LOOKOUT SPOTS THE DUO-AND A NERVOUS FINGER TIGHTENS ON THE TRIGGER!

WHEN, AS THE 'LOOKOUT' RECOGNIZES THE TWO FIGURES UNDER THE LIGHT OF A STREET ARC...

C-CAPTAIN AMERICA! WILD!

...HE TURNS ON HIS HEELS AND FLEES IN PANIC!

THE YELLOW-LIVERED HORN NEVER FIRED! I'LL GET HIM!

DON'T BOTHER, BUCKY! THERE'S BIGGER GAME WAITING FOR US INSIDE THE BANK. HAMMER RILEY & CO.!

AND AS 'HAMMER' RILEY GLOATS OVER THE BIGGEST HAUL IN THE GANG'S HISTORY...

OUGHT TO BE CLOSE TO TWO HUNDRED GRAND! WHAT?? CAPTAIN AMERICA!

NEVER MIND THE SMALL FRY, BUCKY! IT'S HAMMER HIMSELF WE WANT!

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR... GOFER!

DON'T LOOK NOW, RILEY - BUT YOUR LOOT IS SLIPPING!

JUST AS CAP HAS HAMMER RILEY WITHIN GRASP, BUCKY LEAPS, AND...

Y-E-OW-W-W-W

BUT IF NOT FOR ME YOU'D HAVE HAD HAMMER!

DON'T WORRY - WE'LL CATCH UP WITH HIM SOMEHOW! BUT FIRST LET'S ACCOMPANY THESE BOYS TO HEADQUARTERS.....

MEANWHILE, IN A GETAWAY CAR SPEEDING WILDLY AWAY FROM THE BANK

(GROAN) TWO HUNDRED GRAND - AN' IT SLIPPED RIGHT THROUGH OUR MITTS!

I TOLD YOU SNATCH WOULD LET US DOWN! HE'S YELLOW - ALWAYS WAS!

SHADDUP! BUT JUST WAIT'LL I GET MY HANDS ON THAT WEASEL!

AND WHEN RILEY ENTERS HIS HIDEOUT..

OOOF! Y-YOU GOT AWAY HUH, BOSS? HA HA! I-I KNEW IT! NOT EVEN CAPTAIN AMERICA CAN NAB HAMMER RILEY! NO SIR! TAKE A WHOLE ARMY, I ALWAYS SAID! AND THEN THEY'D FIND IT PLENTY TOUGH! HA-HA-HA!

SNATCH ???? HERE??

HAMMER'S HAM-LIKE FIST SHOOTS OUT, AND....

YOU - YOU GOTTA BELIEVE ME, BOSS! I COULDN'T SHOOT! THEY WERE ON TOP OF ME BEFORE! HADDA CHANCE TO PULL THE TRIGGER! CAPTAIN AMERICA CLIPPED ME --- AND I--

WHOOP!

YOU CHEAP LIAR! IF CAPTAIN AMERICA CLIPPED YOU YOU'D HAVE BEEN OUT COLD FOR A WEEK!

OOOOF!

SOCK!

AFTER AN UNMERCIFUL BEATING UNDER HAMMER'S RELENTLESS FISTS...

OKAY! GET 'IM OUT OF HERE!

BRUISED AND BATTERED, SHIVERING WITH COLD, 'SNATCH' SHAMBLES THROUGH THE ICY NIGHT AND TAKES REFUGE IN THE SHELTER OF A DOORWAY...

HAMMER AIN'T GETTIN' AWAY WITH THE BEATIN' HE GAVE ME! I'LL FIND SOME WAY OF PAYIN' OFF THAT LOWDOWN SKUNK! **BRR-BRRR!** I'LL HAVE TO GET ME A HAT AND COAT OR I'LL FREEZE TO DEATH!

COSTUMES

WHILE INSIDE THE SHOP...

IF YOU DO NOT LIKE **THIS** COSTUME, SIR, I FEAR THERE IS NOTHING ELSE I CAN SHOW YOU!

BUT MY DAUGHTER IS GIVING THE MASKED BALL AND INSISTS ON SELECTING THE COSTUME I'M TO WEAR!

HERE'S SOMETHING, DAD!

AFTER LOOKING AT FIFTY COSTUMES, YOU CHOOSE **THAT** THING??

THAT, SIR, IS A TRUE REPLICA OF THE FAMOUS **ROBE OF EVIL**! IT HAS A FANTASTIC LEGEND ATTACHED TO IT!

TELL US ABOUT IT, PLEASE!

AFTER HEARING THE LEGEND OF THE ROBE...

WHAT A THRILLING STORY! TOO BAD IT ISN'T THE REAL **ROBE OF EVIL**, DAD! THEN YOU'D BE THE MOST POWERFUL AND EVIL PERSON IN ALL THE WORLD AND...

RUBBISH! LET'S TAKE IT AND GO! I'M FAMISHED!

S SNATCH WATCHES THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER, HIS THIEVING MIND SURGES WITH HOPE...

WE'LL EAT OVER THERE!

ALL RIGHT, DADDY! I'LL LEAVE THE ROBE IN THE CAR!

O SOONER HAVE THE GIRL AND HER FATHER LEFT THAN

I GOT IT! NOW TO GET OUTTA HERE!

MAYBE IT'S SOMETHING I CAN HOCK FOR A FEW BUCKS.... ENOUGH TO GET ME A WARM COAT AND SOME HOT FOOD!

ND WHEN SNATCH OPENS THE PACKAGE...

JUST A BUNCH O' RAGS! ANOTHER ROTTEN BREAK! BUT AT LEAST THIS THING'LL KEEP ME FROM FREEZIN' TO DEATH!

UDDENLY... AS THE FOLDS OF THE SHABBY ROBE CLOSE ABOUT THE PUNY BODY OF THE SNIVELING SNATCH, THE FADED PATCHES OF COLOR COME TO LIFE AND RADIATE BLINDING, DAZZLING SHAFTS OF LIGHT! AND WITH IT, A MIRACULOUS CHANGE COMES OVER THE WEARER!

THE STRENGTH OF A HUNDRED OXEN IS MINE! I FEEL THE COURAGE OF THE LION.... THE CUNNING OF THE FOX! I SAY TO ALL MEN... BEWARE! I AM **THE ROBE**! I AM THE POWER OF EVIL... REBORN!

S THE STRANGE FIGURE GLOWS WEIRDLY THE POLICEMAN ON THE BEAT RACES TO INVESTIGATE...

HEY, WHAT'S COMING OFF HERE?

SWIFTER THAN A RATTLESNAKE'S THRUST, THE ROBE'S MIGHTY HAND DARTS OUT AND...

AGH--GR GR-R-R-GHR!

TAKE HEED, ALL WHO WOULD DEFY 'THE ROBE'! THUS SHALL YE ALL PERISH!

I SHALL DIVEST MYSELF OF MY GUISE FOR THE PRESENT, LEST MY APPEARANCE INVITE ADDED ENCOUNTERS. I MUST NOT TARRY. THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE!

THEN THE AWESOME GLOWING FIGURE OF THE ROBE VANISHES AND ONCE AGAIN, IN IT'S STEAD, IS THE CRINGING, COWARDLY SNATCH...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT DOES IT, BABY, AND I DON'T CARE! ALL I KNOW IS THAT WHEN I'M WEARING YOU, I AIN'T 'SNATCH' ANY MORE! I'M 'THE ROBE' TALKING THAT CRAZY LINGO! IN A FEW MINUTES I'LL BE AT HAMMER'S HIDEOUT---HA-HAHAHA! THEN I'M PUTTIN' YOU ON, AND YOU'RE STAYIN' ON ME FOREVER!

YES, SNATCH'S WARPED BRAIN HAS GRASPED THE TERRIBLE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MIRACLE OF "THE ROBE"...AND ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN!

MINUTES LATER AT HAMMER'S HIDEOUT, A STARTLED GUARD GASPS IN ASTONISHMENT!

WHA...?? STOP! STOP OR--I'LL--BLAST--YA TA BITS!

BLAM

BLAM

THE SOUND OF SHOTS BRINGS HAMMER AND HIS MOB OUT WITH GUNS SPITTING LEAD!

BLUP! AM I SEEIN' THINGS? THE BULLETS ARE GOING RIGHT THROUGH HIM!

(GASP) IT AIN'T HUMAN!

FOOLS! DO YOU THINK YE PUNY MEN CAN DO ME HARM? KNOW YE THAT I AM IMPERVIOUS TO ALL INJURY!

BANG

I AM 'THE ROBE'---MASTER OF EVIL! I HAVE COME TO LEAD YOU TO PILLAGE AS YE HAVE PLANNED THIS NIGHT!

WHO--ARE--YOU?

BUT WE CAN'T GO THROUGH WITH THE JEWELRY STORE JOB! CAPTAIN AMERICA COLLAPED SOME OF MY BOYS! THEY MIGHT SING --- OW-W-W! O-O-F-F-!

HOLD YOUR COWARDLY TONGUE --- I HAVE SPOKEN! ASSEMBLE YOUR MEN --- FOR WE DEPART AT ONCE!

SLAP!

MEANWHILE, AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS AFTER FUTILE HOURS OF "GRILLING"...

YOU HAVE OUR PROMISE THAT THE D.A. WILL GO EASY WITH YOU! NOW WHERE'S HAMMER?

I DON'T TRUST NO COPPERS! LET CAPTAIN AMERICA OKAY THAT PROMISE AND I'LL TALK! I KNOW HE'LL PLAY SQUARE WITH ME!

THEY'LL KEEP THEIR WORD! NOW — WHERE'S HAMMER?

O.K. I KNOW YOU'LL PLAY BALL! YOU WON'T FIND HAMMER AT HIS HIDEOUT. HE'S KNOCKING OFF MOREAU'S JEWELRY STORE AT MIDNIGHT!

HE'S LYING! HAMMER WOULDN'T DARE PULL ANOTHER JOB TONIGHT!

HE HAD YOU COPPERS PEGGED RIGHT! HE KNEW YOU'D FIGURE IT THAT WAY!

MOMENTS LATER — WAILING SIRENS HERALD THE APPROACH OF POLICE, AND — THE FIRST MEETING OF CAPTAIN AMERICA AND "THE ROBE"!

THE COPPERS! TAKE WHAT YOU GOT AND SCRAM — OUCH!

NAY! HOLD! COMPLETE YOUR TASK! THE ROBE AND HIS HENCHMEN DO NOT FLEE THE FORCES OF SOCIETY!

WE-E-E-E-E!

CALMLY THE ROBBERS CONTINUE TO STRIP THE STORE, TOTALLY IGNORING POLICE ORDERS!

PEACH, YOU GUYS! WE'VE GOT YOU DEAD TO RIGHTS!

HEED NOT SUCH COMMANDS! PROCEED WITH YOUR TASK MEN!

HOLY COW! WHO'S THAT STANDING WITH HAMMER?

QUICKLY CAP OVERCOMES AMAZEMENT AND LEAPS TO THE ATTACK!

VERILY, THE FATES ARE KIND! I DID NOT HOPE TO MEET YOU CAPTAIN AMERICA!

GET A LOAD OF THAT PHONEY GAB! IS THAT CHARACTER KIDDING US!

WE'LL SOON FIND OUT BUCKY! HEAVE TO!

AND CAP DOES FIND OUT--THE VERY INSTANT HE CRASHES A POWERFUL RIGHT INTO THE JAW OF THE LEERING FIGURE IN THE GLOWING ROBE! AND SO DOES BUCKY---AND THE POLICE! SUDDENLY, FOR SOME MYSTERIOUS REASON, ALL ARE HELPLESS!

HO-HA-HOHA! THIS IS A PICNIC, BOYS! BASH THE COPPERS GOOD! HO-HA-HO-HA!

EEOby OUCH! (GASP) WHAT HIT ME?

WHOOSH! I PUT EVERYTHING I HAD INTO THAT BLOW---AND I NEVER BUDGED HIM!

INSTINCTIVELY CAP FALLS INTO A CLINCH PLANNING TO GRAPPLE WITH HIS EERIE OPPONENT. THEN A CHILLING REALIZATION DAWNS!

GREAT GUNS! ALL MY STRENGTH IS DRAINING OUT OF ME!

COME, HAMMER! GATHER THE LOOT! OUR TASK IS COMPLETED!

SOME MINUTES LATER ...

WHY DIDN'T YOU KNOCK OFF **CAPTAIN AMERICA** INSTEAD OF JUST BANGING HIM AROUND, BOSS? WITH HIM OUT OF THE WAY, THERE'D BE NO STOPPING US!

CAPTAIN AMERICA CAN BE DESTROYED AT WILL! HE REMAINS ALIVE ONLY THAT HE MAY WITNESS THE TRIUMPH OF EVIL!

THE ROBE SHALL WIELD ALL CRIMINAL ELEMENTS INTO A VAST EMPIRE OF CRIME! **LAW AND ORDER SHALL PERISH! ONLY EVIL WILL REIGN!**

WOW! WHAT AN IDEA! AND WITH YOU AS TOP MAN WE CAN'T MISS. COUNT ME IN, **ROBE!**

THEN, AS THE ROBE THROWS BACK HIS HOOD ...

WE'LL ALL BE ROLLIN' IN DOUGH! WE'LL --- **UGH!** S-N-A-T-C-H ---PPPP IT --CAN'T --BE!!

U.S.

UH!

YOUR MEN SHALL BE MY HELPERS, AND I WILL REWARD THEM WELL! BUT NOW, HAMMER-- **PREPARE TO DIE!**

HA! SO DID I PLAN TO LET YOUR GREED TASTE OF FABULOUS WEALTH, HAMMER RILEY! NOW -- I HAVE OTHER PLANS FOR YOU!

NO- NO! I'LL DO ANYTHING, SWATCH -- **ANYTHING YOU SAY!**

MERCILESSLY, HAMMER IS HURLED ACROSS THE ROOM — CRASHING AGAINST THE FAR WALL TO LAND... A LIFELESS HEAD!

GULP

GULP

NOW VENGEANCE IS MINE! HA-HA!

AT HEADQUARTERS MEANWHILE, THE BATTERED AND BRUISED REPRESENTATIVES OF LAW AND ORDER, STILL DAZED BY THEIR AMAZING EXPERIENCE, SOBERLY WEIGH THE FUTURE...

WHO IN THE NAME OF SASSAFRAS IS THAT GUY IN THE ROBE? WHERE'D HE POP UP FROM?

THAT ISN'T AS IMPORTANT, CHIEF, AS THE STRANGE POWER HE HAS OF WEAKENING HIS OPPONENTS! LOOK WHAT HE DID TO CAP!

BESIDES HIS ABILITY TO DRAIN AN OPPONENT OF HIS STRENGTH, **THE ROBE** HAS SUPERHUMAN POWER! HE IS APPARENTLY INVULNERABLE TO HARM. REMEMBER WE ALL SAW **A DOZEN SHOTS FIRED AT HIM WITHOUT EFFECT**! IF YOU ASK ME, GENTLEMEN — WE ARE CONFRONTED WITH THE GRAVEST THREAT OF ALL TIME TO SOCIETY!

I DON'T BELIEVE IN FAIRY TALES OR GHOSTS, **CAPTAIN AMERICA** — BUT MAYBE WE'RE UP AGAINST SOMETHING THAT AIN'T HUMAN!

OH, HE'S HUMAN, ALL RIGHT! **BUT OUR FIRST JOB IS TO DISCOVER WHAT GIVES HIM HIS SENSATIONAL POWERS!**

ANY IDEAS, CAP?

YES—THE ROBE HE WORE. IF HE WEARS IT PURELY TO SHIELD HIS IDENTITY, WHY ALL THOSE COLORS THAT GLOW SO WEIRDLY? BLACK CERTAINLY WOULD--

CAPTAIN WILSON?

WHAT'S THAT? REPORT A PACKAGE STOLEN FROM A CAR, NOW? WITH ALL I GOT ON MY MIND?

BUT--BUT--CAPTAIN, THEY TOLD ME IT HAD A ROBE IN IT! AND I THOUGHT--

A ROBE?? WAIT!

THEN AS IF SOME MYSTERIOUS POWER WERE MANIPULATING THE STRINGS OF HUMAN EVENTS--- THREE STRANGERS ENTER...

THE ANSWERS TO HIS STACCATO BURSTS OF QUESTIONS MAKE CAP'S PULSES LEAP!

WHY—YES! IT WAS MULTI-COLORED AND HAD A HOOD!

THE COSTUMER SAID IT WAS A REPLICA OF A LEGENDARY ROBE OF EVIL! TOLD US A RIDICULOUS TALE -- SOMETHING ABOUT FANTASTIC POWERS THE WEARER WOULD ACQUIRE!

TELL US EVERYTHING THE COSTUMER TOLD YOU--- EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT ROBE! IT IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE, SIR!

MY DAUGHTER HAD BETTER TELL YOU, CAPTAIN AMERICA. I DIDN'T LISTEN TO THE STORY TOO CLOSELY!

WELL, THE COSTUMER TOLD US THAT THE ROBE OF EVIL FIRST CAME TO LIGHT---

AND SO, WITH CAP, BUCKY AND THE POLICE CAPTAIN EAGERLY DRINKING IN EACH WORD, THE GIRL RECOUNTS THE MYSTERIOUS HISTORY OF THE 'ROBE OF EVIL' AS TOLD TO HER BY THE COSTUMER! BUT WILL THE STORY REVEAL THE SECRET OF THE ROBE'S POWER??? CAN CAPTAIN AMERICA COMBAT THIS COLOSSUS OF CRIME---OR WILL 'THE ROBE' AND HIS 'EMPIRE OF EVIL' TRIUMPH OVER LAW AND ORDER?

CAPTAIN AMERICA

GOOD WILL NEVER BE CONQUERED AS LONG AS MAN EXISTS --GOOD WILL BE REBORN-- AGAIN AND AGAIN !!!!!

CHAPTER 2

THE Robe of EVIL

...THE ROBE OF EVIL FIRST CAME TO LIGHT CENTURIES AGO WHEN THE WORLD WAS EMERGING FROM CHAOS! THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS WAS CLOAKED IN THE ROBE OF EVIL! WHEN HE AND HIS EVIL HOSTS WERE CONQUERED AND DRIVEN INTO THE FIERY PIT OF THE NETHER REGIONS!

"THE LEGEND GOES ON TO TELL OF THE SECOND APPEARANCE OF "THE ROBE OF EVIL" IN EGYPT! THIS WAS ABOUT 5000 B.C.--- WHEN THE BRUTAL CONQUEROR HASKOS, AFTER A REIGN OF TERROR AND BLOODSHED, WAS FINALLY PUT TO DEATH!"

"THE THIRD APPEARANCE OF THE ROBE OCCURRED IN ROME IN THE YEAR 200 B.C. IT WAS WORN BY "PERGAMIUM" RUTHLESS LEADER OF A SAVAGE TRIBE, WHO PAID WITH HIS LIFE FOR A BLOODY ORGY OF MURDER AND LOOTING!"

"THE FOURTH TIME---IN FRANCE, THE WEARER OF THE ROBE WAS "DE SIGNY" INFAMOUS ROBBER CHIEF EXECUTED FOR HIS MONSTROUS CRIMES BY AN AROUSED PEOPLE!"

THAT WAS THE LAST TIME THE ROBE OF EVIL WAS HEARD OF! BUT ACCORDING TO THE LEGEND, IT WAS NEVER DESTROYED, AND WILL REAPPEAR AGAIN AND AGAIN!

BUT THE WEARER OF THE ROBE WAS DESTROYED EACH TIME!

WHICH PROVES THAT THERE **IS** SOME WAY OF OVERCOMING THE STRANGE POWERS OF **THE ROBE**! OTHERWISE THE WEARERS IN THE PAST COULD NOT HAVE BEEN CAPTURED AND EXECUTED!

WAS THERE SOMETHING ELSE IN THE LEGEND? SOMETHING PERHAPS ABOUT THE POWERS OF THE "**ROBE**"?

WHY---YES! IT WOULD MAKE THE WEARER INVULNERABLE TO HARM---- INVINCIBLE! GIVE HIM GREAT STRENGTH AND CUNNING!

TRY TO REMEMBER! IS THERE ANYTHING IN THE LEGEND TO EXPLAIN THE WEARER'S POWER TO WEAKEN HIS OPPONENTS?

NO--- THE COSTUMER DIDN'T SAY I TOLD YOU ALL HE TOLD ME.

WHILE CAP QUESTIONS THE GIRL FURTHER, **BUCKY** ABSENTMINDEDLY TOYS WITH THE SWITCH OF A POWERFUL SPOT LIGHT USED IN CRIMINAL INTERROGATION ...

THEN, AS **BUCKY** FINGERS THE SWITCH, THE LAMP SUDDENLY LIGHTS AND---

THERE MUST BE MORE TO IT! I'LL GO TO SEE THE COSTUMER— SAY! **WHAT---???**

MY EYES!

CLICK!

WITH A WHOOP OF TRIUMPH, A SURPRISED **BUCKY** IS HOISTED INTO THE AIR!

I COULD KISS YOU, **BUCKY**—IN FACT, I WILL! YOU ALWAYS DO THE WRONG THING— AT THE **RIGHT** TIME! UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, I'VE FINALLY FOUND **THE KEY TO THE ROBE'S POWERS!**

(GASP) HEY! DON'T!

AND THEN **CAPTAIN AMERICA** STARTS THE POWERFUL MACHINERY OF THE LAW ROLLING....

SEND OUT A GENERAL ALARM CHIEF! INSTRUCT ALL AUTHORITIES TO LOCATE **THE ROBE'S** HIDEOUT. **BUT NOT TO ATTEMPT HIS CAPTURE! THAT'S OUR JOB!**

MANY WEEKS GO BY AND DESPITE THE GREATEST MANHUNT IN THE ANNALS OF CRIME, LED BY THE TIRELESS **CAPTAIN AMERICA** AND HIS PAL **BUCKY**--**THE ROBE** IS STILL AT LARGE! WITH EACH PASSING HOUR, THE TERROR OF THE LAW-ABIDING CITIZENRY INCREASES AS A TIDAL WAVE OF **MURDER** AND **ROBBERY** SWEEPS THE NATION!

NEW YORK CITY!

MURDER

BONDS

ROBBERY

HELP!

BLAM!

HELP!

WHERE'S THE ROBE'S HIDEOUT?

NO--NO----I CAN'T TELL YOU! I SAW WHAT HE DID TO THE OTHERS THAT DOUBLE-CROSSED HIM! YOU— YOU CAN'T MAKE ME TELL!

HELP! ROBBERY!

CHICAGO

WHERE IS THE ROBE?

I DON'T KNOW—AND I WOULDN'T TELL YA IF I DID! YOU'LL NEVER GET ANYONE TO RAT ON THE BOSS!

SAN FRANCISCO!

CALLING ALL CARS! CALLING ALL CARS! THE ROBE HAS STRUCK AGAIN! RUSH ALL AVAILABLE MEN—

YOU COPS ARE ALL BATTY IF YOU THINK YOU'LL EVER GET THE ROBE! AND WHAT'S MORE, YOU CAN'T KEEP ME HERE—— THE ROBE'LL SPRING ME LIKE HE DID ALL HIS OTHER BOYS!

NO USE! THESE CROOKS ARE SO AFRAID OF THE ROBE, THEY JUST WON'T TALK!

EVERY CRIMINAL IN THE COUNTRY, FROM PETTY THIEF TO BIG-TIME GANG LEADER, HAS FLOCKED TO **THE ROBE'S** BANNERS! BY NOW HIS CRIMINAL ARMY NUMBERS ALMOST HALF A MILLION AND IT'S GROWING EVERY DAY!

AS LONG AS THE ROBE IS ALIVE TO LEAD THEM, THE WHOLE NATION IS AT THEIR MERCY!

AND YOU DON'T GET A CHANCE TO TAKE A CRACK AT HIM, **CAP!** HE'S YELLOW---AFRAID OF YOU, THAT'S WHY!

I DON'T THINK SO, **BUCKY. THE ROBE** FEELS SECURE IN HIS POWER AND HAS NO FEAR! HE PROBABLY HAS HIS REASONS FOR AVOIDING US!

MAYBE HE'S FOUND OUT THAT YOU KNOW THE WAY TO OVERCOME HIS POWERS?

MY METHOD IS JUST A THEORY THAT CAN ONLY BE PROVED WHEN WE MEET **THE ROBE, BUCKY!**

SAY! COME TO THINK OF IT---YOU NEVER TOLD ME HOW YOU'RE GONNA DO IT!

CAPTAIN! THIS FLASH JUST CAME OVER THE AIR!

OH-OH!

RADIO---
POLICE DEPARTMENT

TONIGHT AT THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT, I SHALL BROADCAST MY ULTIMATUM TO THE NATION (SIGNED) THE ROBE!

THE NEWS OF THE ROBE'S PROPOSED BROADCAST SPREADS LIKE THE WIND, AND AT MIDNIGHT A BADLY FRIGHTENED NATION HUDDLES NEAR RADIOS!

ATTENTION, AMERICA! ALL FORCES OF LAW AND ORDER SHALL BE DISBANDED! YOUR SOLDIERY SHALL SURRENDER ALL ARMS TO MY CAPTAINS AT DESIGNATED ARMORIES! THE POLICE SHALL DO LIKEWISE AT HEADQUARTERS IN EACH CITY! ALL COURTS OF JUSTICE AND GOVERNING BODIES SHALL CEASE FUNCTIONING

A A D

AND IF YOU DISOBEY - I STAND READY TO SEND FORTH MY CRIMINAL LEGIONS TO DEVASTATE THE WHOLE COUNTRY AND SLAY WITHOUT MERCY THE INNOCENT AND THE HELPLESS! CHOOSE A SPOKESMAN TO SPEAK YOUR ANSWER!

I WAIT UNTIL THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT TOMORROW! IF YOUR ANSWER BE "NO" THEN SHALL THE ROBE TAKE BY FORCE WHAT YOU HAVE DENIED HIM!

ONLY TWENTY-FOUR HOURS!

HOLY HANNAH! WHAT AN ORDER!

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BROADCAST IN THE SECRET HIDEOUT OF THE ROBE....

SOME SPEECH, BOSS! NIFTY!

YEAH! A PIP!

DA BEST I EVER HOID.

SILENCE! HOLD YOUR FAWNING TONGUES!

LISTEN WELL TO YOUR APPOINTED TASK! **CAPTAIN AMERICA** IS TO BE BROUGHT TO ME! I DESIRE HIS PRESENCE IN MY HOUR OF TRIUMPH TO WITNESS THE CROWNING OF **THE ROBE** AS MONARCH OF EVIL! THEN WILL HE BE DESTROYED AS I HAVE LONG PLANNED!

BUT, BOSS, **CAPTAIN AMERICA** AIN'T NO PUSHOVER! AND HE AIN'T EXACTLY EASY TO FIND!

MY INFORMERS HAVE MADE KNOWN HIS WHEREABOUTS, AND MY PLAN HAS BEEN DEVISED TO LIGHTEN YOUR MISSION! GO FORTH AT ONCE! AND TAKE HEED THAT HE COME TO ME UNHARMED!

THE NEXT NIGHT, AFTER WEARY HOURS SPENT TRYING TO LOCATE SOME OF THE ROBE'S HENCHMEN IN HOPE OF FINDING HIS HIDEOUT BEFORE THE FATAL HOUR... **CAP** AND **BUCKY** ARE STILL ROAMING THE CITY...

WE'LL NEVER FIND HIM IN TIME, **CAP**! THERE HASN'T BEEN A SINGLE CRIME SINCE HIS BROADCAST! **CAP**---LOOK!

A HOLDUP! JUST WHAT I'VE BEEN HOPING FOR! ON THE DOUBLE, **BUCKY**!

A FEW SWIFT STRIDES---AND **CAPTAIN AMERICA** AND **BUCKY** LASH OUT!

SOMETHING PHONEY ABOUT THIS, **CAP**! THESE BABIES AREN'T HALF TRYING!

LOOK AROUND, **BUCKY**, AND YOU'LL HAVE THE ANSWER TO THE RIDDLE!

AND AS THE DUO BATTLES THE HORDE OF THUGS CAPTAIN AMERICA NOTICES A STARTLING FACT...

THEY'RE NOT USING GUNS OR KNIVES! THEY OBVIOUSLY WANT TO CAPTURE US NOT KILL US! WELL, I'LL PLAY INTO THEIR HANDS!

SOCK!

NO CAP DOES -- FOR A MOMENT! LATER HE DELIBERATELY TAKES A GLANCING BLOW!

OH MURDER! THEY GOT ME -- OUCH!

FOR SEVERAL HOURS CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY ALTERNATE BETWEEN HOPE AND DESPAIR ON A WILD RIDE THROUGH THE NIGHT...

HOPE WE'RE NOT TOO LATE!

UGH! CREEPY LAYOUT! THE ROBE OUGHT TO BE IN HOLLYWOOD DIRECTING HORROR PICTURES!

SMART BRAT, EH? GET GOIN'!

... UNTIL THEY FINALLY REACH THEIR DESTINATION - THE ROBE'S HIDEOUT !!!

GO! THE ROBE DESIRES TO BE ALONE WITH CAPTAIN AMERICA AND HIS COMPANION! WITHIN THREE MINUTES, MIDNIGHT SHALL TOLL --- AND THE NATION WILL GIVE ME ITS ANSWER!

WHEW! WE GOT HERE JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME!

THANKS FOR FREEING MY HANDS, ROBE! THEY'RE NUMB!

YOUR LIFE WAS SPARED ONLY BECAUSE I DESIRED YOUR PRESENCE HERE IN MY HOUR OF TRIUMPH! THEN I WILL DESTROY YOU - COMPLETELY!

JUST THEN - THE VAST STONE HALL ECHOES THE TOLLING OF A CLOCK .... MIDNIGHT !!!

BONG BONG

AHA! THE CLOCK STRIKES THE FATAL HOUR.... THE HOUR FOR THE NATION'S ANSWER TO MY ULTIMATUM!

THREE HEARTS LEAP WITH MIXED EMOTIONS AS THE ANSWER COMES OVER THE AIR FROM THE NATION'S SPOKESMAN!

SUDDENLY - AS THE ROBE REACHES FOR THE MIKE TO RADIO THE GO-AHEAD SIGNAL TO HIS MEN....

...AND HERE IS YOUR ANSWER MR. ROBE! WE DO NOT SURRENDER! WE ARE DETERMINED TO FIGHT YOU AND YOUR KILLERS UNTIL.... (CLICK)

ATTENTION! THIS IS... WH...?

NO - BUCKY! STAY OUT OF THIS! DO AS I SAY - DON'T TRY TO HELP ME!

YAHOO!

FOOLS! YOU SHALL PAY --- ALL OF YOU, WITH YOUR LIFE'S BLOOD!

FROTHING WITH RAGE, **THE ROBE** LEAPS TO THE ATTACK AND **BUCKY**, NOT DARING TO DISOBEY **CAP'S** ORDERS, WATCHES IN AMAZEMENT!

CAP? BACKING AWAY FROM A FIGHT AND MISSING BY A MILE? I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

ACCURSED FOOL! NOW YOU ARE IN MY GRASP AND SHALL DIE!

(GROAN) SOMETHING'S WRONG! **CAP** FELL INTO THAT CLINCH LIKE A PUG OUT ON HIS FEET!

REGAINING HIS BALANCE, **THE ROBE** AGAIN LASHES OUT---ONLY TO RECOIL IN ASTONISHMENT!

YOUR STRENGTH! YOU HAVE NOT LOST IT?

NO, YOU CHEAP MURDERER! AND NOW I'M GOING TO CRUSH **YOUR** STRENGTH--- FOREVER!

WITH THE REALIZATION THAT THE POWER OF **THE ROBE** OF EVIL IS USELESS AGAINST **CAPTAIN AMERICA**...

AS **THE ROBE** TRIES TO HOIST **CAP'S** APPARENTLY HELPLESS FORM INTO THE AIR, HIS "VICTIM" SUDDENLY EXPLODES INTO DYNAMIC ACTION!

I WILL REND YOU LIMB FROM LIMB! I WILL---OWW!

ORDERS OR NO ORDERS, I'M GONNA---EEOW! **CAP** SNAPPED OUT OF IT!

...**THE ROBE** MAKES A DESPERATE LEAP AND...

I AM DONE! I MUST FLEE!

STOP, YOU FOOL! YOU'LL BE KILLED!

DAZED WITH FEAR, THE ROBE RIPS HIMSELF FREE OF CAPTAIN AMERICA'S GRASP...

...AND IT IS THE COWARDLY PETTY THIEF "SNATCH" WHO HURTLES TO HIS DEATH, LEAVING THE ROBE OF EVIL BEHIND!

NO USE, BUCKY, HE'S DONE FOR!

MINUTES LATER, CAPTAIN AMERICA BROADCASTS DIRECT TO THE ROBE'S MEN AS THEY AWAIT THEIR LEADER'S SIGNAL...

THIS IS CAPTAIN AMERICA SPEAKING! THE ROBE IS DEAD! WITHOUT HIM, YOU HAVEN'T A CHANCE! I WARN YOU NOW - SURRENDER - OR BE HUNTED DOWN LIKE DOGS!

OH, BROTHER, WHAT A GUY THAT CAD IS!

SIMPLE, BUCKY!! I DISCOVERED IT WAS THE BUNDING COLORED RADIATION OF THE ROBE THAT ROBBED US OF OUR STRENGTH, SO I KEPT MY EYES SHUT DURING THE ENTIRE BATTLE!

HOLY CATFISH! NO WONDER YOU WERE FANNING THE AIR WITH THOSE POWERFUL HAYMAKERS! BUT WHAT PUT YOU HEP TO HIS SECRET?

THEN, WHILE THE ROBE'S MEN ARE ROUNDED UP CAP BUILDS UP A ROARING FIRE AND...

YES, SNATCH ACQUIRED A POWERFUL WEAPON WHEN HE CAPTURED THE ROBE OF EVIL. TOO BAD HE DIDN'T KNOW THAT WHOEVER HAD WORN IT CAME TO A VIOLENT DEATH!

BUT, CAP- WHAT WAS THE SECRET OF THE ROBE'S POWER?

YOU DID, PAL - WHEN YOU BLINDED ME WITH THAT POLICE LAMP I RECALLED BLINKING FURIOUSLY WHEN WE FIRST MET THE ROBE! IT WAS ONLY A THEORY, BUT IT WORKED! DON'T EVER GROW UP, BUCKY - SOMETIMES YOUR PLAYFUL LITTLE HABITS COME IN MIGHTY HANDY!

AW, CAP! D'YA HAVE TO RIB ME ALL THE TIME? JEEPERS!

THE END

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

DUST rose in the air like a yellow fog, rolled across the corral and enveloped Ted Manners, where he stood watching the cow-hands inside the enclosure. Steve had just given the black stallion a work-out. For a brief space of time there had just been the heavy thunder of hoofs as the stallion fought in a desperate effort to dislodge the wiry Steve. And Ted had felt the cold breath of fear down his back. He had never seen anything like this out East, but he could remember the day he'd been thrown riding a stable horse.

"Steve's the only one who can fork that black devil," a voice said, bringing Ted out of his momentary revery with a start. "Anyone else would have been thrown in nothing flat."

Ted shifted his slim body to stare at Slim Hannagan's tanned face.

"Jimmy, your brother, tells me you figure on helping out." Slim added, grey eyes appraising Ted's length. "Riding is about the only thing done around here. Seems like Jim's sort of kept you away from things. And now, while he's in town, it's a good time to get started. We've got a filly out here who's safe enough. How about it?"

For what seemed a long time Ted hesitated. Many things raced through his mind, but uppermost of all was the fact that he must get in the works and do his share. Jim needed the help. His small spread was worth money. And Ted knew he could be no idle spectator.

* * * * *

TED MANNERS faced the speculative grey eyes of the tanned man at his side. "Okay," Ted consented. "Better get on with it before Jim gets back."

The filly was beautiful. Now she was saddled and waiting, Slim Hannagan holding the reins till Ted Manners came out to take over. Steve and the others were grouped at one side of the corral. There was an air of expectancy about them. Ted pushed his unwilling body across the dusty earth to where Slim and the filly stood.

Slim Hannagan said gently, "It's all yours, son. Out here you're either a cow-puncher or . . . nothing."

Ted had the reins then and Slim was gone and for a moment there was just the beauty of the filly, the soft dust under foot, the hot sun shining down like a molten spotlight.

Resolutely Ted Manners mounted. The filly moved slowly, stiff-legged. Out in the center of the corral she flipped her head. Ted could feel the tense power within her, like a potential bomb timed to explode at any second.

Explode she did. Ted remembered her rearing, remembered the crash of her body as she came down again. Remembered her rising under him again like an earthquake.

Dust became a heavy fog in the air. The smash of hoof beats, the twisting of the filly's powerful body, set up a strange rhythm inside Ted Manners. He must not, he knew, grab leather.

Suddenly the filly straightened out. She was racing straight for the corral fence.

She came in on an angle, designed to rip him from her back. At the last second Ted threw his leg out of the way. An instant later the horse struck and glanced off.

Ted felt himself flying through space, saw the dusty earth coming up with a rush to meet him. Then he struck and the hot sunlight, the thick smell of the dust were gone and there remained only blackness.

* * * * *

IT WAS cool in the ranch house. Ted looked up into Jim's somber face. "No bones busted."

Jim said evenly, "It's a wonder. If Slim wasn't one of my best riders," he continued, "I'd fire him right off the bat. But I can't afford to lose anyone now."

Ted grinned painfully. "It's okay. I'm still going to ride. They probably think I'm scared—"

"You lay off," Jim interrupted sharply. "I don't want my kid brother laid up with some busted bones. Not to mention doctor bills!"

Which was just the trouble, Ted realized secretly. He was Jim's kid brother. And because of that Jim wouldn't give him a chance to do his share, as well as whip the fear within him. He

knew he had temporarily won the admiration of the other hands, but if he failed now he'd be called a coward.

"Don't give up," Slim Hannagan advised one afternoon, meeting Ted out beside the corral. "Right people aren't scared of horses, because a horse is the best friend a man can have."

There were days when no one was around the ranch house at all, and it was one of these days that Ted Manners got a saddle and bridle on the filly, led her out of the corral and away from the ranch. He realized from what Slim had said they they knew he was scared. And he couldn't stand that.

* * * * *

IN THE distant sky thunderheads were piling up in grey-white masses. Ted continued to walk the filly until he had reached a point where the hills jutted out to the cliffs and from which could be seen the distant desert. Usually there was a rider out there, where the herd would come on up the valley, lifting to higher ground and running along the cliffs, over which the drop was a good two hundred yards to the bottom.

Ted could see Jim's small spread far down the valley. The sky awakened with the sound of distant thunder, and Ted turned toward the sweeping thunderheads.

The nearness of rolling thunder across the sky, the sight of the distant herd crossing the valley toward the ranch, brought something new to Ted's mind. Again the rolling thunder, seeming to find an echo deep in the core of the earth. Ted's eyes sought the sight of the cattle crossing the valley.

Lightning flicked over them. The crash of thunder came swiftly, bringing with it a deathless stillness that pressed in about Ted. The sun was gone, followed by premature gloom.

Again the thunder. And through the shadow of the foothill storm, Ted saw the scene before him suddenly explode into drama, tense and dangerous and tearful.

For he saw the stampede at its start. He saw a rider racing along beside the herd as it thundered into swift life, and began to surge fluidly along, swinging out in a huge arc up the valley and toward the cliffs. And as he watched breathlessly, Ted saw the rider plunging his horse desperately forward in an effort to reach the leaders, to turn them aside, drive them west and away from the cliffs.

Then Ted cried out sharply. For that rider had gone down!

Almost without thought, Ted Manners whirled and swung into the saddle. Again without thought he sent the filly forward. Her slim body burst into flashing motion as she hurtled down the slope and out across the open. It was a desperate chance, but Ted Manners knew it must be done.

* * * * *

IT WAS one man and one horse pitted against the surging mass of the stampede. Lightning flicked again, jagged and dangerous. The wind was in Ted's face. The muffled hammer of hoof beats made a mad rhythm in his ears, as the filly flung herself forward. They were beside the flank of the stampede. The crash of hoofs seemed almost to drown out the resounding roar of thunder overhead.

Rain slashed at him. Sure of foot, the filly drove forward till she was running at the lead of the stampede. Somehow Ted whipped his shirt off. He was driving at the leaders, now only a few yards removed. He could see the glassy fear in their eyes, saw the swing of their heads. Their horns were almost at his hand as he whipped frantically at them. They were headed for the cliffs. He'd be driven over with them. He'd be killed in the fall. . . .

They were swinging away to drive on into the hills. Trembling with exertion, soaked by the slashing rain, Ted Manners drew the filly gently to the side, watched as the tide of cattle whirled past him, sweeping away to the west and to safety.

* * * * *

THE DARKNESS was soft outside the bunk house. Ted Manners leaned back comfortably. Steve and Slim and others were there. Steve spoke first:

"Looks like we got ourselves a sure-enough cow-hand, eh, Slim?"

Slim Hannagan looked through the darkness and Ted could feel a tide of color rise to his cheeks. If they saw him blushing—

Slim murmured: "I figured all the time we did have. I didn't reckon Jim Manners' kid brother could be anything else." Slim added, after a moment's thought, "Diverting Jim's herd that way took nerve and riding. I reckon Ted Manners is going to be tops."

Ted reminded, "You're forgetting the horse. It wasn't just me—"

"I'm not forgetting," Slim interrupted. "I just hoped you'd say that about . . . your best friend."

THE END

THE HUMAN TORCH

THE HUMAN TORCH AND THING PIT THEIR SKILL, COURAGE AND QUICK WITS AGAINST... THE KILLER WHO DIED TWICE!"

HARRISON STEEL COMPANY, A SMALL FIRM LOCATED ON THE FRINGE OF A GREAT NEW JERSEY STEEL CENTER...

BUSY LITTLE MILL, FULFILLING THE LAST OF IT'S WAR CONTRACTS...

MIKE! BANK THE FIRE IN NUMBER THREE FURNACE, QUICK... IT'S WERNER! I'M GETTIN' THE BOSS!

BOSS, IT'S WERNER! HE HE

WHAT? AN ACCIDENT...?

HE FELL IN THE MOLTEN STEEL IN NUMBER THREE! IT WAS AWFUL!

GOOD LORD! WE'RE SHUTTING DOWN!

SOME HOURS LATER, IN A NEW YORK APARTMENT...

YES, THIS IS **TORCH**, MR. WALKER WILL I TAKE A CASE? GIVE ME THE DETAILS!

MY PARTNER WAS KILLED A COUPLE OF HOURS AGO... MY FOREMAN CLAIMS HE ACCIDENTALLY FELL INTO A CRUCIBLE OF MOLTEN STEEL! BUT A FEW GLARING DISCREPANCIES ON THE SCENE CONVINCE ME IT'S MURDER!

I SEE... DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING...WE'LL BE RIGHT OVER!

HOW CAN WE PROVE IT'S MURDER IF EVERY TRACE OF EVIDENCE HAS BEEN DESTROYED?

BY FINDING THE ONE MISTAKE, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, THAT EVERY CRIMINAL MAKES! IT'S A FACT THAT NO CRIME OR CRIMINAL IS PERFECT!

LATER, THE HARRISON STEEL CO.

COME, I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT I MEAN BY DISCREPANCIES, AND YOU'D BETTER PUT THESE ON! THE HEAT FROM THE FURNACES IS TERRIFIC!

ASBESTOS, EH? WHERE IS STEVE LARS, YOUR FOREMAN?

ON THE WALK UP AHEAD...I'D BETTER TELL YOU WHAT MAKES ME SUSPECT MURDER! THE STEEL IS MOLTEN...BUBBLY! WHEN AN OBJECT, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, DROPS INTO IT, IT SHOOTS UP OVER THE RIM OF THE CRUCIBLE AND SPATTERS!

ANYONE AND ANYTHING WITHIN TWENTY FEET OF THE RIM WOULD BE SPATTERED WITH MOLTEN METAL! YET, THERE'S NO TRACE OF FRESH SPATTER NEAR NUMBER THREE! SO, IF WERNER'S IN THAT CRUCIBLE, SOMEONE MUST HAVE KNOCKED HIM OUT AND LOWERED HIM INTO IT...AND STEVE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CLAIMED TO SEE THE ACCIDENT!

HMM! I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND!

OH, STEVE! THESE GENTLEMEN ARE STATE SAFETY INSPECTORS! SEE THAT THEY GET COOPERATION!

YES, SIR!

YOU WITNESSED WERNER'S DEATH. WAS HE WEARING HIS ASBESTOS SUIT?

YES, SIR! HE'D NEVER GET NEAR THE FURNACE WITHOUT IT!

GOOD! I WANT THE STEEL FROM THIS CRUCIBLE DRAWN... AND WE'LL GO DOWN AND OBSERVE IT!

I THOUGHT I'D JOIN YOU. I DON'T THINK YOU'LL FIND ANY TRACE OF MERNER!

I HAVE A PLAN — WATCH CAREFULLY FOR ANY FOREIGN MATTER IN THE METAL!

MOMENTS LATER, THE STEEL DRAWN...

THAT'S PECULIAR! SEE ANYTHING?

NOTHING AT ALL!

NO, TORCH!

NOW THAT MERNER'S DEAD, WHO INHERITS HIS SHARE OF THE MILL?

WHY ... I DO. AND HAD MY DEATH PRECEDED HER-NER'S, HE WOULD HAVE INHERITED MY SHARE... YOU DON'T THINK...

IN A MURDER CASE, MR WALKER, EVERYONE IS A SUSPECT UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT! COME, TORO!

WHY ARE WE LEAVING? WE JUST STARTED THIS CASE!

I HAVE A THEORY, TORO! IF IT PANS OUT, WE'VE FINISHED, NOT STARTED THIS CASE!

OKAY! WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?

AT QUITTING TIME, WE'LL TAIL STEVE LARS! I THINK HE AND A CERTAIN PARTY HAVE COOKED UP A WEIRD PLOT!

...AND AT QUITTING TIME THAT EVENING...

THERE HE IS, BUT I THINK WE'RE FOLLOWING THE WRONG MAN! WALKER'S MORE FOR MY MONEY! HE GAINS BY WERNER'S DEATH!

WE'RE STILL TAILING STEVE!

WHAT'S HE GOING IN THERE FOR? THAT'S NO MORNINGS MAN'S HOUSE.

I'VE A HUNCH HE'LL BE OUT IN A FEW MOMENTS AND WITH A COMPANION IN TOW!

MINUTES TICK BY.....THEN...

IF I'M RIGHT, THEY'LL HEAD FOR THE MILL! THEY ARE! IT'S BACK TO THE MILL FOR US!

I DON'T GET IT, BUT I'LL PLAY ALONG

SOME TIME LATER. THE DUO HOVERING ABOVE THE MILL... SEES.

HERE THEY COME!

I'LL BE...SAY! LOOK'S LIKE DIRTY WORK AFOOT!

THERE'S PLENTY AFOOT! WE'LL WATCH FROM THE ROOF!

LOOK, TORCH! THEY'VE GOT WALKER!

THE TWO MEN BEGIN TO FORCE WALKER TOWARDS THE FURNACE, WHEN...

TAKE THEM ALIVE, KID!

YOUR FRIENDS WON'T SAVE YOU, WALKER! I STARTED TO KILL YOU, AND I'LL FINISH THE... OOH, SAVE ME... SAVE MEEEEEE——

MMA...! IT'S WERNER! HE ISN'T DEAD... HE DIDN'T FALL INTO THE...

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL IRONIC JUSTICE!

HOW'D YOU GUESS, TOREN?

HE'D HAVE FOUND HIS ASBESTOS SUIT IF HE HAD FALLEN IN! HE DIDN'T! WHICH MEANT HE WAS ALIVE AND THIS FOREMAN LIED... RIGHT?

I'LL TALK! WERNER PEGGERED TO KILL WALKER FOR THE MILL! HE PLANED DEAD TO GIVE HIMSELF AN ALIBI, KNOWING THE MILL'D GO TO HIS WIFE! SHE'D SELL AND SKIP TO MEXICO WHERE HE'D JOIN HER! HE PAID ME TO LIE SO THERE'D BE NO QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS DEATH!

AN INCREDIBLE PLOT!

WELL, LOOKS LIKE THERE NEVER WAS A PERFECT CRIMINAL OR A PERFECT CRIME!

The End.

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by You

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CAPTAIN AMERICA

THE BIZARRE STUDIO OF A FAMOUS SCULPTOR IS A STRANGE SETTING FOR THE MYSTERIOUS RITUAL OF VOODOO AND ITS FANATICAL FOLLOWERS, WHO RUTHLESSLY OBEY ITS LAW OF TERROR AND DEATH! ***CAPTAIN AMERICA*** AND ***BUCKY*** 'CHISEL' IN ON A CUNNING MURDER PLOT TO MEET SPINE-TINGLING ADVENTURE AND TRY TO PROVE THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS...

"MURDER ETCHED IN STONE!"

INSPECTOR GRADY, HEAD OF HOMICIDE, WELCOMES TWO FRIENDS...

TALK ABOUT A BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY - CAN'T YOU EVER RELAX? CATCH ME SEARCHING RECORDS IF I WERE IN-BETWEEN CASES LIKE YOU!

NEVER CAN TELL WE MIGHT COME ACROSS SOMETHING INTERESTING!

SURE! PLENTY OF UNSOLVED CASES IN THOSE FILES THAT WE MIGHT CRACK FOR YOU THE NEXT TIME WE HAVE A COUPLE OF HOURS TO SPARE!

BUCKY! THAT'S NO WAY TO TALK TO THE INSPECTOR!

INSPECTOR, YOU'RE WANTED IN THE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY, SIR!

COME ALONG IF YOU LIKE CAPTAIN AMERICA! WHAT'S UP, HOGAN?

SOME HYSTERICAL DAME YELLING ABOUT HER OLD MAN BEING MURDERED!

TAKE IT EASY, DEAR!

NO! PLEASE! PLEASE! I'M ALL RIGHT! IT'S THAT BEAST— HE'S KILLING FATHER!

WHAT BEAST? WHO'S KILLING YOUR FATHER— AND WHERE?

MINUTES LATER, SOMEWHERE ALONG SWANK PARK AVENUE

HURRY! FATHER WILL DIE IF THAT MAN FINISHES THE STATUE!

I GIVE UP! I CAN'T MAKE HEAD OR TAIL OUT OF HER HYSTERICAL BABBLING!

WE'LL GO WITH YOU IMMEDIATELY MISS!

HE— HE HAS A STUDIO IN THE PENTHOUSE, CAPTAIN AMERICA!

THEN WE'LL JUST PAY HIM A LITTLE SOCIAL CALL!

21193

A SHARP RING IS ANSWERED BY A SAVAGE-LOOKING SERVANT, WHO SPIES THE POLICE— AND IMMEDIATELY ATTEMPTS TO SLAM THE DOOR!

NO CAN! COME IN! MASTER NOT HOME— OWF!

THEN WE'LL WAIT, THANK YOU!

IN YOU GO, BOYS!

CAP LEADS THE RUSH INTO A WEIRDLY FURNISHED ROOM... TO MEET A FIERCE ASSAULT BY OTHER STRANGELY GARBED SERVANTS!

HOLY CATS! THIS JOINT LOOKS LIKE A HOLLYWOOD SETTING FOR A JUNGLE HUT!

ZOK!

HE'S IN THAT ROOM!

WAIT, MISS! I'D BETTER GO WITH YOU!

POW!

CAP STOPS SHORT IN AMAZEMENT AT THE SIGHT OF A FIGURE BUSILY CHIPPING AWAY AT A PORTRAIT BUST— COMPLETELY OBLIVIOUS TO THE COMMOTION OUTSIDE!

OH! STOP HIM! HE'S FINISHING THE STATUE!

AND AS THE FRANTIC YOUNG GIRL MAKES A WILD ATTEMPT TO DESTROY THE SCULPTOR'S WORK...

(SOB!) YOU CAN'T! YOU CAN'T! I WON'T LET YOU!

REALLY MISS DREW! YOUR CONSTANT INTERFERENCE IS BECOMING QUITE A PROBLEM!

(SIGH) I'M AFRAID EVEN **CAPTAIN AMERICA** CAN'T HALT MY WORK! AND NOW IF YOU'LL KINDLY EXCUSE ME...

TSK! TSK! GENTLEMEN DON'T REFUSE A LADY'S REQUEST. SUPPOSE WE SEE WHETHER OR NOT I CAN STOP YOUR WORK!

ALL CLEANED UP INSIDE! WELL-- WELL-- IF IT ISN'T OUR OLD FRIEND IVOR THE SCULPTOR!

YOU KNOW HIM?

KNOW HIM? I SHOULD SAY! DON'T YOU REMEMBER HIS NAME SPLASHED OVER ALL THE PAPERS ON THOSE TWO MURDER RAPS? SOME VOODOO BUSINESS--- IVOR WAS ACCUSED OF CAUSING THE VICTIMS' DEATHS BY CARVING THEIR IMAGES IN MARBLE!

THE INSPECTOR FAILED TO ADD THAT I WAS ACQUITTED ON BOTH CHARGES!

YOU REMEMBER, DAD! WE READ ABOUT IT WHILE WE WERE IN SOUTH AMERICA ON ANOTHER CASE! THE VICTIMS TOOK SICK AND DIED OF SOME MYSTERIOUS DISEASE THE DAY HE FINISHED THEIR STATUES!

SO THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAID YOUR FATHER WAS BEING MURDERED!

(SOB) YES - DAD IS VERY ILL! HE'LL DIE LIKE ALL THE OTHERS WHEN IVOR IS FINISHED! (SOB) YOU MUST STOP HIM!! PLEASE!

I DON'T TAKE MUCH STOCK IN YOUR ALLEGED POWER TO CAUSE DEATH BY CARVING SOMEONE'S IMAGE! BUT GOOD GRIEF, MAN - THE LEAST YOU CAN DO IS TO STOP WORKING ON--

HE CANNOT! OS-SO-ME-LIM- WILL NOT PERMIT! OS-SO-ME-LIM- MIGHTY ANGEL OF THE IMAGE OF DEATH HAS SO DECREED!

YOU HEARD! IF I STOP THE VICTIMS WILL DIE ANYWAY! I AM IN "OS-SO-ME-LIM'S" POWER!

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU! INSPECTOR CRADY THERE MUST BE SOME WAY TO STOP THIS MADMAN!

I'M AFRAID WE'RE STYMIED CAPTAIN AMERICA! HE WAS TRIED ON SIMILAR CHARGES IN THOSE OTHER TWO CASES AND WE COULDN'T PROVE A THING AGAINST HIM!

I'LL FIND SOME WAY!

MOMENTS AFTER THE POLICE LEAVE...

WHEW! I THOUGHT THEY'D TAKE THE WHOLE LOT OF US IN!

THEY BROKE IN WITHOUT A SEARCH WARRANT AND CRADY KNOWS THE LAW! WE HAD A RIGHT TO RESIST THAT WAS A SMART MOVE MAKING THAT VOODOO SPIEL! GOT ME OUT OF A TIGHT SPOT!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM! HA-HA-HA THEY'LL DO ANYTHING OLD OS-SO-ME-LIM TELLS THEM TO DO!

LET'S GET OVER TO THE DREW HOUSE BEFORE CAPTAIN AMERICA STARTS SNOOPING AROUND! TELL YOUR INDIANS SOME STORY OR OTHER AND GET THEM TO GO WITH YOU!

MEANWHILE... OUTSIDE...

I JUST REMEMBERED SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT THIS CASE INSPECTOR! WEREN'T THE TWO VICTIMS WHO DIED SOME SORT OF CITY OFFICIALS?

YES! COUNCILMEN --- ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO!

DAD WAS TOO!

TWO DEAD AND ONE DYING EH? HOW ABOUT THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL? CAN YOU LOCATE THEM FOR ME, INSPECTOR?

IN FIVE MINUTES IF WE GO TO HEADQUARTERS!

WE'LL MEET AT YOUR HOME AS SOON AS WE GET THE INFORMATION AND GET HOLD OF THE DOCTOR WHO IS TREATING YOUR FATHER! I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS MYSTERIOUS AILMENT!

THANK YOU, CAPTAIN AMERICA! I'LL HAVE HIM THERE FOR YOU!

TEN MINUTES LATER, CAPTAIN AMERICA HAS THE DESIRED INFORMATION AND IS ON HIS WAY...

JEEPERS, CAP! HOW THE DICKENS CAN WE CHECK ON THE SURVIVING MEMBERS OF A COUNCIL THAT MET FIVE YEARS AGO?

TWO MEN ARE STILL ON THE COUNCIL AND WE'LL FIND THEM DOWN AT CITY HALL! SAVVY?

AT CITY HALL CAP QUESTIONS THE COUNCILMEN...

SURE! WE'RE ALIVE AND SO ARE ALL THE OTHERS! THAT PROVES YOU'RE WRONG CAPTAIN AMERICA!

SORRY, BUT YOUR THEORY THAT IVOR IS WIPING OUT ALL THE MEMBERS OF THAT PARTICULAR COUNCIL IS RUBBISH!

EXACTLY, GENTLEMEN! SO I INTEND TO LEARN WHY YOU WERE SPARED THE MYSTERIOUS ILLNESS OF DREW AND THE HORRIBLE DEATHS OF THE OTHER VICTIMS!

YOU'RE BUILDING A FALSE THEORY ON PURE COINCIDENCE! WE TOLD THE COURT ALL THE FACTS WE KNEW AT IVOR'S TRIAL. THERE WAS NO MOTIVE AND THE MURDER CHARGE WAS DISPROVED. HIS ACQUITTAL BEARS US OUT!

IVOR HAD SOME MOTIVE FOR MURDERING THE OTHERS. PERHAPS YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MOTIVE WAS?

GUESS I WAS WRONG! SORRY, GENTLEMEN! COME ON, BUCKY! OH YES... BY THE WAY...

STUMPED BY THE ELUSIVE TACTICS OF THE TWO COUNCILMEN, CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY PREPARE TO LEAVE...

WE JUST CAME FROM IVOR'S STUDIO. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE INTERESTED IN KNOWING HE WAS WORKING ON A BUST OF ONE OF YOU GENTLEMEN! WASN'T HE, BUCKY?

HUH? OH SURE! AND— AND IT WAS A SWELL LIKENESS!

NO! HE CAN'T! HE PROMISED!

THE DIRTY DOUBLE-CROSSER! I PAID HIM $25,000!

WELL, GENTLEMEN! ARE YOU READY TO TALK NOW?

YES, YES! ALL OF US PAID WHEN WE SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHERS!

DID IVOR DEMAND THE MONEY?

OH, NO! HE IS TOO CLEVER! WE WERE ALL STRICKEN WITH THAT TERRIBLE, MYSTERIOUS DISEASE! IN DESPERATION, WE OFFERED HIM THE MONEY TO STOP WORKING ON OUR STATUES. HE DID AND WE RECOVERED!

WHAT ABOUT DREW? DIDN'T HE COME ACROSS?

I DON'T THINK IVOR WOULD ACCEPT IN HIS CASE! DREW WAS CHAIRMAN OF THE ART COMMITTEE!

ART COMMITTEE?

YES! FIVE YEARS AGO, WE COMMISSIONED IVOR, WHO WAS A POOR BUT TALENTED SCULPTOR, TO SUBMIT A MODEL FOR AN IMPORTANT CITY MONUMENT. WHEN WE SAW THE MODEL, WE WERE ALL AMAZED --IT WAS A FANTASTIC NIGHTMARE WHICH NONE OF US UNDERSTOOD! SO WE VOTED TO REJECT IT...

IVOR BECAME VIOLENT--TRIED TO ATTACK US, AND SWORE VENGEANCE! HE WENT TO HAITI FOR THREE YEARS, AND THEN RETURNED, EXTENDING US INVITATIONS TO THE OPENING OF HIS PARK AVENUE STUDIO! THE REST YOU KNOW!

THAT'S THE WHOLE STORY!

WITH THE INFORMATION GLEANED FROM IVOR'S BLACKMAIL VICTIMS THROWING FRESH LIGHT ON THE MYSTERY, THE DUO HURRIES TO THE DREW HOME ONLY TO FIND A BATTERED AND BLEEDING BUTLER STAGGERING TO HIS FEET!

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

NEVER MIND ME, CAPTAIN AMERICA! HURRY! MR. DREW'S BEDROOM!

IVOR'S SERVANTS!

THEY'RE AFTER OLD MAN DREW! LET'S GO KID!

CAPTAIN AMERICA!

OH! UGH! YAHOO!

WHILE CAP AND BUCKY START MOPPING UP, THE LEADER OF IVOR'S THUGS SEIZES HIS OPPORTUNITY TO ESCAPE . . . .

MOMENTS LATER, WITH THREE OF THE THUGS -- PRISONERS!

HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT!

I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! THEY DIDN'T EVEN ATTEMPT TO HARM DAD!

WHAT?

IF THAT'S SO WHY ON EARTH DID IVOR SEND THEM HERE?

PERHAPS WE CAN PERSUADE OUR CAPTIVES TO TELL!

AFTER TEN MINUTES OF FRUITLESS QUESTIONING

OH, SO - ME LIM-- HAS SEALED OUR LIPS!

THE HECK WITH THAT MUMBO-JUMBO! LET'S GET TO WORK ON 'EM, CAP!

FORCE WON'T MAKE THEM TALK- NOT FANATICS STEEPED IN VOO-DOO, LIKE THESE!

THAT'S IT, CAP! THAT VOODOO STUFF! THEY CAME HERE TO WORK IT ON MR. DREW! MAYBE THAT'S WHAT'S MAKING HIM SO SICK!

I HARDLY THINK IVOR'S VOODOO IS THE REASON FOR THE MYSTERIOUS ILLNESS! DO YOU, DOCTOR?

AS A SCIENTIST THE ANSWER IS --- NO!!! YET HERE IS MY PATIENT, WASTING AWAY, DYING AND ALL MY SKILL IS POWERLESS TO HELP HIM!

COULD IT BE THE RESULT OF SOME RARE DRUG?

HARDLY! I THOUGHT OF DRUGS AND CHECKED CAREFULLY. ALL MEDICATION IS BEING SUPERVISED AND AN INJECTION WOULD LEAVE ITS MARK!

IVOR MUST BE CAUSING DREW'S ILLNESS IN SOME WAY! I WANT TO TALK WITH THE PATIENT.

CAP'S QUESTIONING ELICITS A SLIM CLUE

SOMETHING STRANGE-- NIGHTMARISH-- DOES COME BACK! MAYBE---A-- DREAM--- BUT-- SEVERAL-- TIMES--- AWOKE---- AND THOUGHT--A-- MAN-- WAS-- IN---- THE---- ROOM-- BENDING OVER ME! BUT-- HE-- NEVER TOUCHED---- ME-- I'M-- SURE-- --OF-- THAT!!

BELIEVING THAT SOME CLEVER PSYCHIC MEANS IS BEING USED TO INDUCE THE MYSTERIOUS AILMENT CAP SETS OUT FOR IVOR'S STUDIO..

... WHERE A TRAP IS BEING SET!!!

DO YOU THINK IT'LL WORK?

WITHOUT QUESTION! JUST MAKE SURE YOU GET THE JUMP ON HIM BEFORE HE HAS A CHANCE TO UPSET MY PLAN. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST!

AVOIDING THE ELEVATOR, CAP AND BUCKY MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE PENTHOUSE, HOPING TO SURPRISE IVOR - BUT THE TRAP HAS BEEN TOO WELL LAID!

THERE'S IVOR INSIDE - WORKING ON THE STATUE! WE CAN BURST IN ON HIM BEFORE... EEOW!

ON YOUR TOES, KID! LOOK WHAT'S COMING!

BUCKY IS THE FIRST TO REVIVE, TO FIND CAP BOUND AND UNCONSCIOUS AND IVOR CHIPPING AWAY AT A PARTLY FINISHED BUST...

LOOKS LIKE OUR LITTLE SURPRISE PARTY BOOMERANGED! UGH!

WAIT, CAP! I'LL GIVE YOU A HAND, PAL --

OOF!

POW!

DEFTLY WIELDED WAR CLUBS OVERCOME THE SURPRISED CAP AND BUCKY BEFORE THEY CAN PROTECT THEMSELVES!

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH HIM?

OVERCOME YOUR PRECIOUS CAP'S SKEPTICISM ABOUT VOODOO! AH! HE'S STIRRING!

GULP! IT'S CAP!

YES! HE WILL DIE LIKE THE OTHERS - AS SOON AS I FINISH!

AS CAP SLOWLY REVIVES...

SO YOU'VE GOT US, EH? CLEVER OF YOU, BUT I STILL DON'T BELIEVE IN YOUR VOODOO!

YOU WILL SHORTLY...!! THESE FLAG LIGHT WILL HELP ME SEE MY SUBJECT BETTER

TEN MINUTES AFTER IVOR STARTS CHIPPING AT THE NEARLY FINISHED BUST, CAP GETS A STRANGE REACTION...

STILL SKEPTICAL, CAPTAIN AMERICA? HA! HA!

GREAT GUNS! I'M GETTING WEAKER BY THE MINUTE! DOES THAT MEAN IVOR ACTUALLY HAS VOODOO POWERS?

AND CAPTAIN AMERICA WEAKENS IN SPITE OF HIS VALIANT EFFORTS TO FIGHT OFF THE MYSTERIOUS FORCE...

TEN MINUTES LATER, CAP IS BARELY CONSCIOUS AND CONTINUES TO SEE VISIONS OF HIS BOYHOOD DAYS...

OH... I... MUST... BE... DREAMING... THIS... CAN'T... BE... REAL!! I'LL... DIVE... IN! THE... SUN'S... AWFULLY..... HOT...

WHEW!... IT'S... HOT... THE... SUN... BLINDING... MUST... NOT... LET... SUN... GET... ME...

SUDDENLY BUCKY WHO HAS BEEN WATCHING HELPLESSLY BURSTS INTO ACTION!

JEEPERS! HE'S KILLING CAP! I'VE GOT TO STOP HIM!

?

CAN'T... GET... AWAY... FROM... THE... SUN...

SNATCHING A SHARP CUTTING CHISEL BUCKY OUT-MANEUVERS HIS CAPTORS...

YOW!

QUICKLY SLICING CAP'S BONDS WITH THE SHARP CHISEL EDGE, BUCKY TURNS TO FACE NEW DANGER!

CAP!! CAP!! HE'S STIRRING!! OH-OH! HERE COMES TROUBLE!

GET HIM!

BUCKY... GOT TO HELP HIM!

SNATCHING CAP'S SHIELD AND A HEAVY MALLET BUCKY MEETS THE FIRST RUSH... SINGLE-HANDED!

SWIFTLY CAP'S MAGNIFICENT RECUPERATIVE POWERS COME TO THE FORE

I-I'VE SNAPPED OUT OF IT NOW! MIND IF I LEND A HAND, BUCKY?

CRACK!

CAP! YAHOO! AND YIPPEE!

A NO SOON...

THAT DOES IT, LAD!

RIGHT!

SOMETIME LATER, WITH THE POLICE ON THE SCENE...

YOU'RE KIDDING! AN ORDINARY LIGHT BULB COULDN'T KILL ANYONE!

BUT THIS ISN'T AN ORDINARY LIGHT BULB - AS NOR WILL TESTIFY!

I STILL DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DISCOVERED MY SECRET, BUT THERE'S NO SENSE IN MY DENYING IT NOW! WE REPLACED THE BULBS IN THE VICTIMS' READING LAMPS WITH SPECIAL, CHEMICALLY-TREATED BULBS THAT GAVE OFF CONCENTRATED ACTINIC RAYS SIMILAR TO THE SUN!

BUT HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE BULBS, CAD?

BY ALMOST BEING A VICTIM MYSELF! WHILE I WAS UNDER THE BULBS INFLUENCE, CERTAIN INCIDENTS IN MY LIFE CAME BACK TO ME...

...AND IN EACH INCIDENT THERE WAS A STRONG SUN ---- A BATHING BEACH, ETC. I SIMPLY PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER AND GOT A **FOUR**-LETTER WORD - **LAMP!**

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